

United States Marine Hospital
800 St. Anthony Street
Mobile
Mobile County
Alabama

HABS No. ALA-781

HABS
ALA,
49-MOBI,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ALA-781

UNITED STATES MARINE HOSPITAL

Location: 800 St. Anthony Street, Mobile, Mobile County, Alabama
Geographic Location Code: 01-2100-097

Present Owner: Board of Trustees, Tuberculosis Sanitorium, District No. 6.

Present Occupant: Same as above.

Present Use: Tuberculosis sanitorium.

Statement of Significance: This building is one of the oldest existing monumental structures in Mobile and is a good example of the Greek Revival style.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1840-43
2. Architect: Frederick Bunnell; John K. Collins, Supervising architect.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The property upon which the hospital stands was purchased by the United States from Joshua Kennedy in 1838 for \$4,000.00. Plans to construct the hospital were apparently initiated in 1837, and there was frequent correspondence between J.B. Hogan, Collector, Mobile, and Levi Woodbury, Secretary of the Treasury, as the planning continued. Several plans for the building were submitted by different architects from 1837 until 1839, when the final decision to build is indicated in a letter of July 16, 1839 from Hogan to Woodbury:

"I have now the honor to report my proceedings on the subject of the erection of a Marine Hospital. on the excerpts of your letter adopting Mr. Barnes plan I...asked for his plan to be handed in by the 25th of June...and...also appointed Jno. K. Collins, Esq. Architect to superintend...and paid Mr. Barnes the usual fee for his plan specifications. in a few days after I had done so, I received your letter reinclosing Mr. Bunnells plan with your remark that it should also be considered...as it came nearer our wants than the first. I accordingly sent for Mr. Bunnell and proposed to him that if he would agree to it I would set up his plan in the office with Mr. Barnes' and request the contractors to estimate on both..." "declared Robert Williamson's offer to be the lowest bid & entitled to the contract and the work to be performed according to Mr. Bunnell's plan for the sum of seventeen thousand five hundred dollars". (Letter in National Archives, Washington, D.C.: Letters on Marine Hospitals, Treasury Department, 1839-1840, Set M, Incoming Letters, #32.)

The hospital opened in April of 1843. The name was changed in 1902 to the "Public Health and Marine Service" and again in 1912 to the "United States Public Health Service". In 1952, the hospital was converted to a small out-patient clinic, and in 1955, the U.S. government ceded the property and building to the State of Alabama for use as a tuberculosis sanitorium.

4. Contractor: Robert Williamson.
5. Original plan and construction: There is some information about the original plans and construction in the correspondence between J.B. Hogan and Levi Woodbury, cited above. The actual plans do not appear to have survived.
6. Alterations and additions: Minor alterations and improvements, mainly on the interior, were made continuously during the nineteenth century. Electric lights were installed in 1901, and the roof had to be reconstructed after the hurricane of 1906. In 1931, the firm of Warren, Knight and Davis, Birmingham, was contracted to design a "T"-shaped addition to the rear of the building, and its construction necessitated the removal of the original north portico. When the hospital was converted into a sanitorium in 1955, another renovation was carried out according to plans by William H. and Dillon K. March, architects in Mobile. In spite of the many renovations, however, the exterior of the building, particularly the south front, has substantially retained its original appearance, except that the open galleries behind the colonnade have been enclosed with modern windows and screens.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

During the Civil War, the building was used as a hospital for Confederate soldiers. In 1865, the hospital was in Union hands and was returned to its original use in 1870.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views, Drawings and Diagrams: The following are located in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.:
 - a. Letters on Marine Hospitals, Treasury Department, 1837-1839, Set M, Incoming Letters.

#115. July 7, 1837

To: Levi Woodbury

From: J.B. Hogan

Includes two unsigned ink drawings which are plans for each story.

b. General Correspondence, Mobile Alabama Marine Hospital,
1854-1899, RE-66.

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1) Tray 1147, 1854-1885.

- a) Plot of site; ink on paper. No date or signature.
- b) "Profile Congress Street from Marine Hospital to River", E. Brown & Son, New York Street Plate no. 1.
- c) "Cloth tracing of the hospital and surroundings", October 8, 1884. (See HABS photocopy)
- d) "U.S. Marine Hospital; Grounds &c."; blueprint signed by J. Goldsborough Bruffs, October 20, 1887. (See HABS photocopy)
- e) Ink sketches on note paper of plans for alterations and repairs. With letter from Julius C. Holmes to M.E. Bell, June 20, 1885.

2) Tray 1148, Folder I, 1899; Folder II, 1900-1906

- a) "Preliminary plan for laundry, machinery, etc."; pencil on tissue paper. With letter dated June 28, 1892.
- b) "Diagram showing floor Space, and Assignment of Same, July 1st, 1894."; ink on paper. (See HABS photocopy)
- c) Plans of proposed improvements. With letter from W.P. McIntosh to Secretary of the Treasury, October 27, 1899.
- d) Diagrams; ink on paper. Signed: W.H. Hutton(?), Surgeon MHS. No date.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Lewis Troost Map (c. 1840), City Hall, Mobile

Mobile Deed Books, Probate Court Record Division,
Mobile County

National Archives, Washington, D.C.:

Marine Hospitals, Treasury Department, No.1, April 8,
1833-May 30, 1848, Set M, Outgoing Letters.

Letters on Marine Hospitals, Treasury Department,
1837-1839, Set M, Incoming Letters.

Letters on Marine Hospitals, Treasury Department, ALA
1839-1840, Set M, Incoming Letters. 49. Mob: 70.

General Correspondence, Mobile Alabama Marine Hospital,
1854-1899, RE-66.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Daily Commerical Register and Patriot, Mobile, No. 209,
April 4, 1839.

Prepared by Linda Carroll
Student Historian
August 29, 1966
and
Charles A. Herrington
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
August 8, 1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building, with a central pediment and a giant Doric colonnade on the side wings, was obviously designed to compliment the neighboring Mobile City Hospital (ALA-13), constructed approximately ten years earlier. These two hospitals and Barton Academy (ALA-32) are the only remaining monumental Greek Revival structures in Mobile.
2. Condition of fabric: The building has been continuously well maintained and is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This is a two story building on a high basement with unequal ceiling heights of 9'-0" on the ground floor, 13'-0" on the main floor, and 11'-10" on the top floor. The original section is basically a rectangle, fifteen bays in length (161'-6"). The middle bays project slightly as a pedimented mass behind a one-story entrance portico. The width of the main block is 50'-4". The north wall of the center section was disturbed when the 1931 addition was made, but it appears that the depth through the center was approximately 62'-0".
2. Foundations: As judged from those above grade, the foundations are brick.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick bearing walls are

approximately 2' thick, stuccoed, scored to resemble ashlar construction, and painted white.

4. Structural system, framing: Floors and roofs are wooden framing on brick bearing walls.
5. Porches, stoops: The building is approached from sidewalk level on the south by two lateral flights of concrete steps to a wide central landing, thence up a broad flight of steps enclosed by stuccoed brick walls, to the granite surface of the entrance portico. Four wooden fluted Doric columns support a flat entablature, above which is a balustrade; the roof of the rectangular portico also functions as a deck. A wooden balustrade painted black closes the east and west sides of the portico. The 1931 drawings for the addition on the north indicate a similar portico on the north rear before it was removed. These drawings also indicate that smaller porches consisting of similar elements existed on the east and west facades, but these have been replaced by steel fire escapes. Drawings submitted with this report include the porch conditions prior to the 1931 changes. On both the north and south facades, the wings flanking the central mass have giant Doric colonnades in front of two-story galleries. These were originally open, with wrought-iron railings, but they have now been enclosed and glazed, somewhat destroying the effect of the colonnade. The columns rest on 4'-0" square brick podia which are the height of the basement story and support a simple flat entablature.
6. Chimneys: The chimneys were removed when the roof was reconstructed.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance door with a granite sill is set within the reveal of the masonry wall with no face trim. The door contains nine clear lights over four wooden panels. It is flanked by side-lights with three lights over a wooden panel and there is a five-light transom over the opening. Side doors on the ground level are similar, but have no transoms. Doors leading to the galleries are modern, containing six lights, and have six-light transoms.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Windows are all double-hung wooden sash with two-over-two or four-over-four lights. There are no shutters in place, but hinge pintles indicate that all windows were originally shuttered. There is a fanlight in the south pediment, now partially used as a vent.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: There is a low gabled roof over the side wings, behind a parapet. The roof of the central gabled pavillion has a steeper pitch. All roofs are covered with standing-seam sheet metal, painted black.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The continuous entablature of the wings consists of simple large-scale mouldings and a smooth frieze. Above the entablature is a stuccoed parapet.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: There is a modern elevator penthouse near the center of the building.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The interior arrangement has been successively changed in renovations, but the basic plan consisted of rooms on either side of two perpendicular axial corridors. Only a few of the thick transverse walls are still in place. It is said that originally, all rooms had fireplaces. 1894 floorplans (see HABS photocopy) may indicate something of the original arrangement of rooms, since "new" partitions are indicated. The plans indicate that the arrangement was basically the same on all floors, with one large room on each side of intersecting corridors in the central pavillion, and one or two rooms on each side of the corridor in the wings.
2. Stairways: The original stairway from the first to the second floor has been removed and access is now gained by a stairway in the 1931 addition. An enclosed stairway on the ground level, however, appears to be in the original location. It is enclosed, with concrete steps and an iron handrail. An elevator has been placed on the east side of the main corridor.
3. Flooring: Modern asphalt tile has been laid over the original floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceilings are painted plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: No original doors remain.
6. Trim: No original trim remains except simple wooden moulded window frames.
7. Notable hardware: None remains.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Central heating has been installed. All rooms are said to have originally had fireplaces, but only one

remains, located in the room east of the entrance door.

- b. **Lighting:** Modern electric fixtures have been installed. It is said that the hospital was one of the first public buildings to be electrified in Mobile; the first installation occurred in 1901.

D. **Site:**

1. **General setting and orientation:** The building and grounds occupy a full city block, the building facing south on St. Anthony Street between Jefferson and Bayou Streets. The slightly older City Hospital, also a Greek Revival building, is similarly situated in the block to the west.
2. **Landscaping:** The grounds are landscaped with lawns, oak and magnolia trees, azalea and crepe myrtle plants. The entire block is enclosed with a high brick wall, painted white. On the south side, the wall is lower and serves as the base for a cast-iron picket fence.
3. **Outbuildings:** In addition to the large 1931 addition which now makes the general complex "H"-shaped, there are five residential buildings to the north rear, one of which is said to be of approximately the same age as the hospital.

Prepared by Woodrow W. Wilkins
Supervising Architect
National Park Service
August 17, 1966
and
Charles A. Herrington
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National Park Service
August 8, 1972

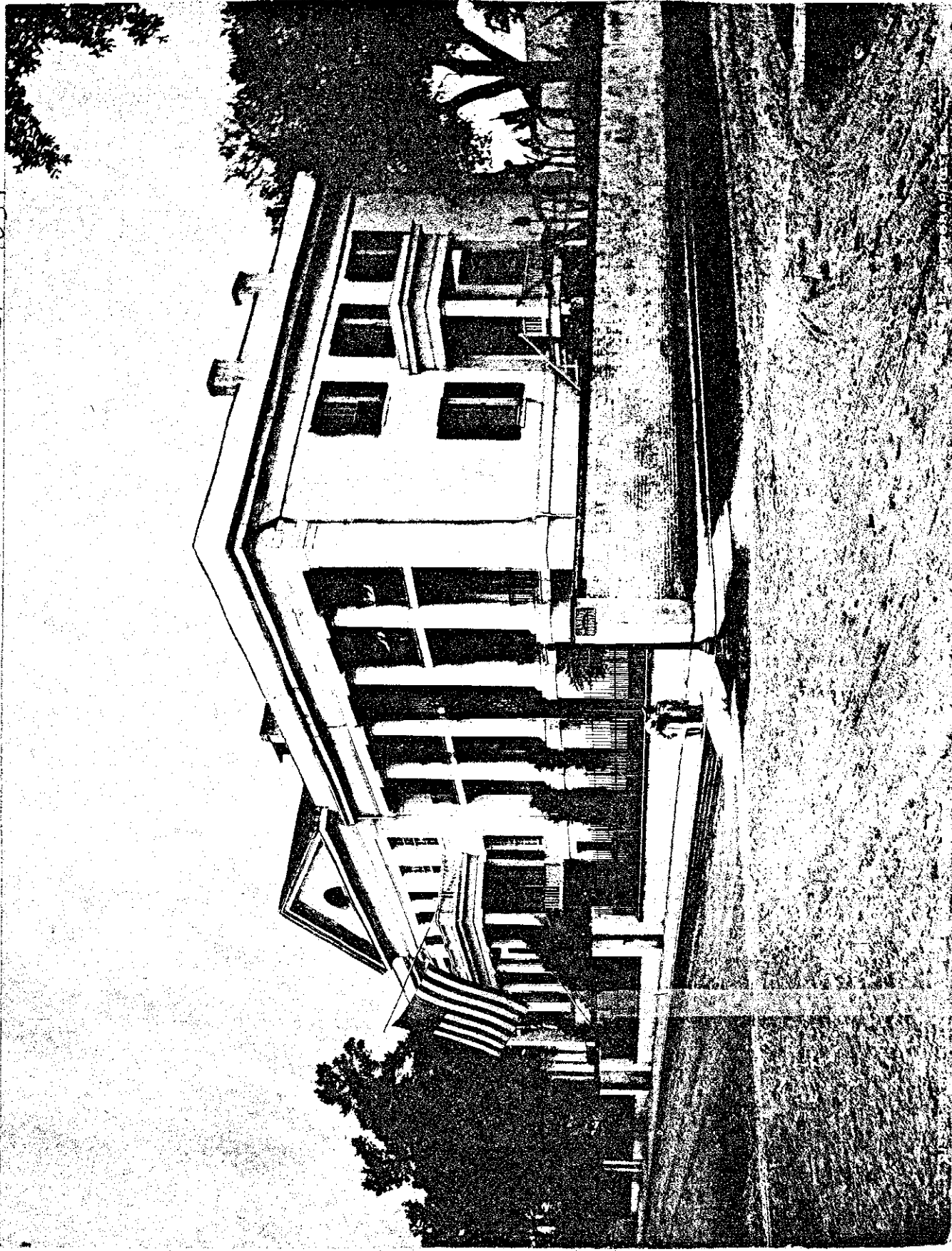
PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as a cooperative project during the summer of 1966 between the Historic American Buildings Survey and various agencies, organizations, and individuals of the City of Mobile. The Historic American Buildings Survey supplied the project supervisor, Woodrow W. Wilkins, and three draughtsmen, Carl J. Rosenberg (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Michael R. Foil (Auburn University), and Lowell K. West (University of Kentucky). One draughtsman, Elbert L. Coleman (Alabama A & M), was provided by the Mobile Housing Board, which agency administers urban renewal. The services of an additional draughtsman, James Eley, specifically designated as an architectural student from Auburn University, were made possible by contributions from numerous local architects and businessmen. The Historic Mobile Preservation Society, in agreement with the History Department of Springhill College, provided a student historian, Linda Carroll. Office space was supplied by the City of Mobile through the City Planning Commission. Roy Thigpen, a local photographer, was contracted to supply the photographs. All local arrangements were made

by the Mobile Historic Development Commission, Mrs. Nancy N. Holmes, President. The project was edited during the summer of 1972 by Charles A. Herrington, Architectural Historian, in a cooperative effort between the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Mobile Historic Development Commission.

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